The Ahwahnee Principles for Climate Change

Preamble

Climate change is not just another environmental issue. Concentrations of human-induced greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere have already reached unprecedented levels and are causing well-documented adverse changes to our planet's physical and biological systems.

We must act decisively to reverse this trend, to lessen the potentially devastating environmental, economic and social impacts that could result.

At the same time, we must predict and prepare for, and adapt to, the unavoidable climatic changes that will likely occur due to the high concentration of greenhouse gas pollutants that are already in the atmosphere.

California is particularly vulnerable to the potential impacts of climate change. Projected increases in temperature and precipitation changes, increased transmission of infectious diseases, and higher air pollution levels could significantly impact public health and mortality rates in our large and aging population. California's coastline communities and wetlands could suffer extensive and irreversible damage as sea levels rise over the next century. Our $45 billion agriculture industry could be impacted by changes in temperature and rainfall patterns and the increased pests and diseases that may accompany those changes. California's water supply is already facing challenges, in part from the shrinking Sierra snow pack. This, the state's largest reservoir, is predicted to lessen by one third over the next 50 years, and to half its historic size by the end of the century.

California's Global Warming Solutions Act, signed by the Governor in 2006, sets a goal of reducing the state's carbon emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 (a 25% reduction) and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. State officials have identified transportation as the largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions, with 38% emitted by all modes of transportation (passenger cars, light and heavy duty trucks, rail and water). The electricity and commercial/residential energy sector is the second-largest source of emissions.

Both sources are significantly influenced by local government land use decisions. This fact gives local government officials both the opportunity and the enormous responsibility of playing a key role in achieving the state's greenhouse gas reduction targets.

In 1991, the Local Government Commission unveiled the Ahwahnee Principles for Resource-Efficient Communities, providing a blueprint for the multiple city and county smart growth policies that followed and setting the path for a national movement. The subsequent Ahwahnee Principles for Economic Development and Ahwahnee Water Principles further support the implementation of the original Ahwahnee Principles. In the face of climate change, all these principles have increased importance, and a growing number of communities continue to adopt them as policy.

Local governments are on the front line, both in dealing with the impacts of climate change and in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These new Ahwahnee Principles for Climate Change build on previous principles authored by the Local Government Commission and provide specific guidance for local governments to follow in addressing this urgent and often overwhelming challenge.

Local Government Commission

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The Ahwahnee Principles for Climate Change

Community Principles

1 Climate Action Plans for mitigating GHG emissions should be put in place by local governments; these will include inventories, targets for reduction, implementing strategies, timelines and a system for reporting annual progress. Plans should be incorporated into general plans either as a separate element that has influence over a broad range of activities or by incorporation into each of the traditional general plan elements.

2 Emissions related to personal auto use are often the largest single source of greenhouse gas pollution, therefore, addressing this source should be central to a Climate Action Plan and a priority for early implementation. Infill development should be recognized as the primary location of new construction, however all new development, wherever it may occur, should be guided by the Ahwahnee Principles for Resource Efficient Communities. Development built according to these principles will display a compact mixed-use pattern that supports walking, biking and transit, and protects open space and agricultural land. Development plans should be coordinated with a regional plan, where one exists. This kind of development can reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and CO2 emissions by 20% to 40% per capita (*Growing Cooler*, Urban Land Institute, 2008).

3 The Electricity and Commercial/ Residential sector is likely the second-largest source of community GHG emissions and an important target for reduction. Thus, energy conservation programs, energy efficiency and the use of a diverse array of clean alternative energy sources should also be central to the community Climate Action Plan and a priority for timely adoption. Applied to new and existing development, green building ordinances, energy conservation retrofit measures, energy efficiency standards for new buildings, and incentives/disincentives to reduce average square footage of new houses are among the measures that can be adopted (www.energy.ca.gov/energy_aware_guide).

4 Climate Action Plans should also include strong water efficiency standards, increased water conservation and water recycling strategies guided by the Ahwahnee Water Principles.

5 A Climate Action Plan should include measures that will help the community to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

This will involve planning for rising sea levels, shrinking water supplies, rising temperatures, food shortages and other challenges predicted to occur in the region.

6 Local governments should lead by example in reducing their own carbon footprint by enacting and implementing policies to reduce GHG emissions from their municipal operations while preparing for unavoidable climate change impacts.

7 Climate Action Plans should be developed through an open process that includes diverse members of the community and public health professionals. The process should include public outreach strategies and assure that the positive and negative impacts of reducing emissions are borne equally by all.

The authors of the Ahwahnee Principles for Climate Change include Larry Allen, San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District; Geoff Anderson, Smart Growth America; Gary Cook, ICLEI; Councilmember Jennifer Hosterman, City of Pleasanton; Dr. Richard J. Jackson, MD, MPH; Mayor Jake Mackenzie, City of Rohnert Park; Jim Murley, Joint Center for Environmental and Urban Problems, Florida Atlantic University; Councilmember Pam O'Connor, City of Santa Monica; Geof Syphers, Codding Enterprises; Dr. Robert Wilkinson, Water Policy Program, UC Santa Barbara; Steve Winkelman, Transportation Program Center for Clean Air Policy; with editors Gregg Albright, California State Department of Transportation; Councilmember Jon Harrison, City of Redlands; and Judy Corbett and Kate Wright, Local Government Commission.

Implementation Strategy

1 All General Plans and Climate Action Plans should be made consistent with the principles contained in Regional Blueprint Plans and Regional Transportation Plans.

2 General Plans and environmental review processes should be integrated with city and county Climate Action Plans to include climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and adoption procedures.

3 Zoning codes should be modified to be consistent with the General Plan to ensure implementation of the integrated General Plan/Climate Action Plan. Performance and form-based codes should be used to achieve the specified outcome.

4 City and county policies should be made consistent with the goals of the community Climate Action Plan (such as flexible work schedules, car-sharing and bike-sharing programs, etc.)

5 Monitoring and measurement of progress made in meeting both goals and targets set forth in the Climate Action Plan should be conducted regularly with results reported to the community.

6 When appropriate, communities should form joint powers authorities to jointly implement their climate action plans through developing sustainability corridors between two or more jurisdictions.

7 Cities and counties should coordinate with nearby jurisdictions and the regional government to share computer tools and other resources, and avoid duplicative efforts.

Regional Principles

1 Each region should develop and adopt, with its cities and counties, a blueprint for growth that achieves regional GHG emissions reduction targets. Blueprints should form the basis for city-centered growth, infill development, open space protection, transit-oriented development and multi-jurisdictional corridor development. They should reflect differences among their communities.

2 Regional Transportation Plans and major regional transportation projects should be consistent with the regional blueprint.

3 Projects consistent with the blueprint that support infill development and reduce single occupant vehicle trips should be given priority in funding and a streamlined implementation process.

4 Efforts should be made by regions to vocally support such projects and defend them against opposition.

5 Regional Housing Needs Assessments that recognize the differences between regions and between communities should be coordinated with and reflect Climate Action Plans and other mechanisms for GHG emission reductions. Regional transportation, land use and GHG reduction plans must recognize differences between regions and between communities.

■ **lgc.org/about/ahwahnee/climate-change-principles**

The Ahwahnee Principles for Resource-Efficient Communities

The Ahwahnee Principles for Resource-Efficient Communities, written in 1991 by the Local Government Commission, paved the way for the Smart Growth movement and New Urbanism. These principles provide a blueprint for elected officials to create compact, mixed-use, walkable, transit-oriented developments in their local communities.

Cities and counties across the nation have adopted them to break the cycle of sprawl. If you like the newly emerging downtowns across the nation – full of people, activities and great public spaces – that's the Ahwahnee Principles in action. Since then, the Ahwahnee Principles for Economic Development in 1997 and the Ahwahnee Water Principles in 2005 have been developed to complement this pioneering vision.

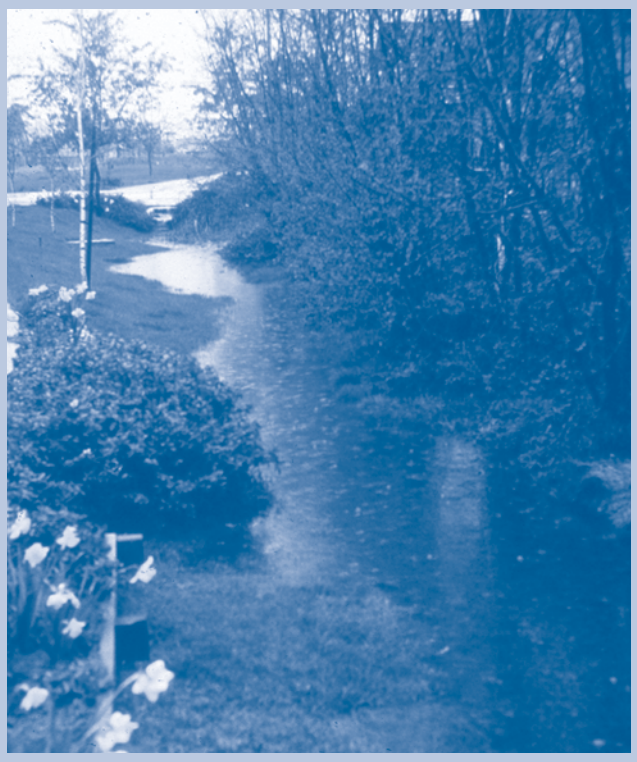
■ **lgc.org/about/ahwahnee/principles**

The Ahwahnee Principles for Economic Development

As the smart-growth approaches to development began taking root in the early 1990s, it became clear that a companion set of principles addressing the economic development aspects of creating more livable communities was also needed, giving rise to the Ahwahnee Principles for Economic Development in 1997.

Prosperity in the 21st century will be based on creating and maintaining a sustainable standard of living and a high quality of life for all. To meet this challenge, a new comprehensive model is emerging which embraces economic, social and environmental responsibility and recognizes the economic value of natural and human capital.

■ **lgc.org/about/ahwahnee/econ-principles**



The Ahwahnee Water Principles

Water – how we capture it, treat it, use it, control it, manage it and release it – is vital to the 36 million people who live in California and has a tremendous impact on our quality of life, local budgets and day-to-day policy-making. And as California adds another 12 million residents by 2030, water-resource challenges will be increasingly serious.

Unless we locate new growth in the right places and develop it properly, the streams, rivers and lakes that receive runoff water will become increasingly more polluted and the natural functions of watersheds that collect and cleanse our water supplies will diminish.

Adopted in 2005, the 14 Ahwahnee Water Principles – identified by water experts as the most effective and viable least-cost options to help guide communities concerned about their future water supplies – address water-wise growth, water conservation, water-friendly neighborhood/site-scale planning and design strategies, and implementation strategies to make the physical changes necessary to ensure water sustainability.

The California State Water Resources Control Board now promotes the principles and is using them as a way of prioritizing grants and loans to local government. The number of cities and counties adopting these principles as policy is growing every day.

■ **lgc.org/about/ahwahnee/h2o-principles**